

Former Firestone Plant, Memphis, Tennessee

Firestone, one of the Mid-South's largest manufacturers, opened in North Memphis in 1936 by moving into a massive factory vacated by a wood-products company, and greatly expanding it. Over time, Firestone Tire & Rubber Company's huge, ultra-modern facility would cover almost 40 acres, and its soaring white smokestack was visible for miles. Run by Raymond Firestone, the son of company founder Harvey Firestone, the Memphis plant served more than 25,000 tire dealers in a marketing region that stretched from Key West to southern Illinois. During World War II, the plant produced rubber life rafts, gas masks, and raincoats for United States servicemen. By the late 1960s, Firestone was rolling out more than 20,000 car and truck tires a day. On July 1, 1963, the company celebrated a remarkable milestone — the production of its 100 millionth tire in Memphis. Beginning with just a few hundred employees, Firestone had grown into the biggest industrial employer here, with a work force exceeding 3,000. The Memphis plant was the largest tire manufacturer in the company's entire worldwide operation. The Firestone tire plant operated until the end of the 1970's, when their production began to dwindle, and finally, in 1983, the plant closed its doors.

In 1997, the EPA provided Brownfields funding to the City of Memphis to conduct an environmental assessment and cleanup planning at the Firestone property. In 2001, the Bridgestone Firestone Trust Fund committed up to \$3.5 million to redevelop the old Firestone plant site located in the North Memphis community known as "New Chicago". The reuse plans included removal of structures, but because the community wanted to keep some of the historic features the boiler house and smokestack remain as a nod to the former industrial use of the property. The City of Memphis, Shelby County, The Bridgestone Firestone Trust Fund and The First Tee of Memphis partnered to develop a life skills and leadership training facility comprised of a computer lab, club repair shop, classrooms, full swing machine, library, 9-hole golf course and a complete golf learning center. This was completed in 2011 and this historic property is back in productive re-use today.



The smokestack and former Firestone property before being put back into productive re-use.



Now home to the Mid-South Junior Golf Association (MSJGA) and The First Tee, the former Firestone property is back into productive re-use.